

# Count/Non-count Nouns

## Count Noun

A **count noun** is anything you can have multiples of or count. For example, you can count *balloons, birds, buildings, words, flowers*, etc.

*There are thirty-six **flowers** in this bouquet.*

## Non-count Noun

A **non-count noun** (also known as a mass noun) is something you **cannot** have multiples of or count. For example, you cannot have multiple *hockeys, advices, or sunshines*.

The first sentence below is incorrect, because advice is a non-count noun.

**Incorrect:** *The **advices** you gave me **were** helpful.*

**Correct:** *The **advice** you gave me **was** helpful.*

The distinction between count and non-count nouns is not instinctual and often varies from language to language. Something that is a count noun in Japanese, for instance, may be a non-count noun in English. Other words, like *water*, can be counted sometimes but not others. At a restaurant, you might indicate that you would like four glasses of water by saying,

*Can we please have four **waters**?*

In another instance, you might say,

*That pool is full of **water**.*

Here, *water* is a non-count noun representing a mass of water.

When in doubt, look the word up in a dictionary that states the difference; *Longman Dictionary* is available online at <http://www.ldoceonline.com/> and gives the distinction after the word like this: **water [uncountable]**.

## Examples of Non-count Nouns

accounting	courage	jealousy	patience	silver
advice	daylight	jewelry	peace	smoking
aluminum	economics	junk	photography	soccer
anger	education	knowledge	poetry	software
applause	electricity	legislation	police	Spanish
architecture	employment	leisure	pollution	sunshine
biology	fun	literature	poverty	supervision
blood	furniture	luggage	practice	truth
clergy	happiness	machinery	research	work
clothing	health	money	satisfaction	
confidence	history	oxygen	scenery	

## Fewer vs. Less

For count words, use fewer. For non-count words, use less.

**Count example:** *There were **fewer** turtles in the pond.*

**Non-count example:** *There is **less** research in this area of psychology.*

## Many vs. Much

For count nouns, use many. For non-count nouns, use much.

**Count example:** *There were so **many** people at the concert.*

**Non-count example:** *She is sneezing because there is too **much** pollen in the air.*

## Non-count Exceptions

Words that are both count and non-count:

beauty	experience	love	paper	success
business	glass	luxury	proof	trouble
coffee	hair	military	reading	
democracy	light	sugar	science	

**Count example:** *He owns three **businesses**.*

**Non-count example:** ***Business** is really good right now.*

**Count example:** *My professor handed back three **papers**.*

**Non-count example:** *I need to fill the printer with **paper**.*